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DE RUEHAK #0596/01 0741427
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 151427Z MAR 07
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1345
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RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU
INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 7898
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 2333
RUEHDA/AMCONSUL ADANA 1748
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 5804
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2177
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000596

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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EUR/SE, EUR/PD, NEA/PD, DRL
JCS PASS J-5/CDR S. WRIGHT

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

THURSDAY, MARCH 15, 2007

In Today's Papers

AKP Surveys Members' Preferences on New Turkish President
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Yeni Safak and others report the ruling AK Party sent out a survey to its provincial organizations asking whom they would like to see as Turkey's new president. In addition to PM Erdogan, the interviewees were asked to choose from among members of parliament Besir Atalay, Mehmet Aydin, Vecdi Gonul, the current defense minister, and Koksal Toptan - all AKP members whose wives do not wear headscarves. Those polled were asked questions such as how they would react to Erdogan becoming the new president and whether they thought Erdogan's presidency would have a positive impact on national stability. The survey will be expanded to reach thousands of AKP officials.

DTP Petition Rejected Due to Use of the Letter 'W'; Raids on Party Offices Continue

Liberal Radikal reports the Diyarbakir Governor's Office has rejected a petition from Turkey's main Kurdish party DTP regarding activities during the upcoming Nevruz festival, due to the fact that "Nevruz" was spelled "Newruz," using a "w," a letter not used in the Turkish alphabet, but used in the Kurdish alphabet.

Radikal also points to ongoing legal action and police raids against the DTP, reporting police raided a party office in the eastern province of Tunceli on tips that DTP members were in touch with the PKK before the forthcoming Nevruz celebrations later this month. Police detained five DTP members, also seizing explosives and secret documents in the homes of suspects, says Radikal.

Editorial Commentary on Turkey's Iraq Policy, Iraq Meeting in Baghdad

Writing in the intellectual Islamist-oriented daily Zaman, Sahin

Alpay breaks down Turkish Iraq policy into three main areas:

"First, the preservation of Iraq's territorial integrity as well as preventing a civil war; second, the assurance that the revenue of Kirkuk oil belong to all Iraqis and Kirkuk is a city for all ethnic

groups; and finally the prevention of the PKK from using Northern Iraq as a base. All of these are justifiable and legitimate goals.

However, reaching those goals via military means is not a rational approach nor is it sensible. Ankara has to use politics and diplomacy to realize its goals on Iraq. One of the most important things about that is to engage in a dialogue with all sides of Iraq, particularly with the representatives of the Iraqi Regional Kurdish Administration. It is also required that Iraqi Kurds should be able to see that their interest lays in a dialogue with Turkey, and be willing to talk to Turkey to make a settlement on the issues. Washington on the other hand, should be a facilitator for realizing an agreement between Turkey and the Regional Kurdish authority, which will also help the US restore its image here in Turkey."

Sami Kohen commenting in the mainstream daily Milliyet, highlights the importance of the recent Iraq neighbors meeting in Baghdad: "Iraqi neighbors, the permanent members of the UNSC and representatives from three international organizations have agreed on and supported the territorial integrity, sovereignty and national unity of Iraq. At first glance it may be seen to be a statement of the obvious. However, given the particular situation of Iraq, this agreement has special importance because it has a binding effect for every country. The international commitment regarding the territorial integrity of Iraq also provides a warning message to those acting with separatist aspirations, including the Iraqi Kurdish leaders. Another important outcome from the Baghdad meeting was the support for Iraq's struggle against terrorism. The declaration also calls for measures to end border violations by terrorist suspects, which should be considered as including border violations from Northern Iraq into Turkey as well. These are all important commitments and I hope that they do not stay only on paper."

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Armenian Resolution Could be Postponed for One Year

Hurriyet cites US Congress sources in saying that the vote in Congress on the Armenian genocide resolution could be postponed until next year. The paper quotes a source in Congress as saying that Speaker Nancy Pelosi will determine the final decision on the resolution. The source says there is a strong pressure from the White House, but on the other hand, Pelosi promised such a resolution to Armenians before the elections. The report explains that some Congress members close to Pelosi object to the resolution being brought to the agenda for national security reasons and that the passage of the resolution will definitely draw Turkey's reaction in an election year. That is why, the source concludes, Pelosi might decide to wait until next year to bring the issue before the House.

MFA Denies Reports on Direct Flights between Yerevan-Van

Milliyet, Sabah and others: MFA Spokesman Levant Bilman said yesterday that he does not have any information about a possible direct flight between Yerevan and Van in order to bring Armenian officials to the opening of the Armenian Church on Akdamar Island in Van, scheduled for March 29. Meanwhile, MFA sources said that the direct flight option came on the agenda of the technical group meeting last week as an alternative to highway transportation.

TV Highlights

NTV, 6.00 A.M.

Domestic News

- The Turkish National Security Council (MGK) monthly meeting will be held on April 9 or 10, earlier than scheduled, to avoid coinciding with the presidential elections between April 16-26.

- Istanbul lawmaker Goksal Kucukali resigned from Motherland Party (ANAP), dropping the number of his party's seats in the parliament to 20. If one more lawmaker resigns, ANAP will lose the required number to form a group in the parliament. The distribution of seats in the Turkish parliament is, AKP 354, CHP 153, ANAP 20, DYP 4, SHP 1, HYP 1, GP 1, Independent 10, and Vacant 6.

- President Sezer has vetoed the appointment of five Turkish Foreign

Ministry deputy undersecretaries because he had not been consulted on the appointments beforehand.

- Prime Minister Erdogan is resting at home because of back pain problems. Health Minister Recep Akdag denied Erdogan had a hernia, saying the prime minister is suffering from muscle spasms.

International News

- The Greek Cypriots refused to comply with an EU decision for launching direct trade with Turkish Cyprus.

- Iran said 207 militants of the Kurdish terrorist organization PEJAK have been detained in the West Azerbaijan province of Iran.

- Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani said Iran would respond militarily in the face of a US attack to disrupt Tehran's nuclear program.

- Several hundred protesters burned American flags in Mexico City to protest the visit of President Bush.
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

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